

Remarks at the Dedication of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library Museum in Boston, Massachusetts

October 29, 1993

Thank you very much, Senator Kennedy, for those moving words and for your friendship and your leadership. Jackie and Caroline and John and all the members of the Kennedy family here assembled—Congressman Kennedy, I thank you for those fine remarks—distinguished Senators and Members of Congress and Governors here present and all of the rest of you who share a part of this historic day.

I want you to know that I felt very much at home today when I got out of the car and the Harvard band was playing the Yale song. And it reminded me of the time when President Kennedy got a degree from Yale, and he said he had the best of all worlds, a Harvard education and a Yale degree. *[Laughter]* I had the Harvard band and the Yale song. Harvard has higher standards. They haven't offered me a degree yet. But for some of us, music is more important than degrees. *[Laughter]*

The great champion of Irish mythology was the young warrior Cu Chulainn. According to legend, he was a hero without peer among mortals. One day a priest told him, "You will be splendid and renowned but short-lived." Cu Chulainn replied, "It is a wonderful thing if I am but one day and one night in the world, provided that my fame and deeds live after me."

Like Cu Chulainn's legend, John Kennedy's fleeting time among us remains a singular story in the history of our great Nation. He was our President for only a thousand days, but as has been said so eloquently by members of his family, he changed the way we think about our country, our world, and our own obligations to the future. He dared Americans to join him on an adventure he called the New Frontier. Listen now to what he said then: "The new frontier of which I speak is not a set of promises. It is a set of challenges. It sums up not what I intend to offer the American people, but what I intend to ask of them." He inspired millions of us to take a very personal responsibility for moving our country forward and for advancing the cause of freedom throughout the world. He convinced us that our efforts would be both exciting and rewarding. He reminded us that our democracy at its best is a bold and daring adventure.

Three decades have passed since President Kennedy's 3 years in office. But his legacy endures in the new frontiers we still explore. Think of his appeal for religious tolerance to the Houston Baptist ministers, and remember that just this week we passed in the Senate Senator Kennedy's religious freedom restoration act. And I thank you very much for that.

Think of the appeal he made for basic civil rights, and remember that it was just this year that we passed the motor voter act, which was the most important piece of civil rights legislation passed in a long time, and that we now have, I am proud to say, the most racially diverse administration in the history of the United States.

From his creation of the Peace Corps to the creation of the National Service Corps, which drew inspiration from City Year here in his own hometown of Boston, we see a common thread of challenging our young people to a higher calling. From his launching of the space program to the preservation and pursuit of the space station this year, we see a continued willingness of Americans, even in difficult economic time, to explore the outer reaches of our universe. From his quest for health care security for our elderly Americans to the quest for health security for all Americans embodied in the bill that the First Lady and I presented to Congress this week, we see a seamless thread of determination to finally dissolve one of the most persistent domestic problems in the history of the United States. From his pursuit of a nuclear test ban treaty to our efforts to stem the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction, to actually dismantle much of the world's nuclear arsenal, we see a common effort for America to be leading the cause of human preservation against nuclear annihilation.

John Kennedy embodied an expansive, can-do outlook toward events beyond our shores as well as the challenges at home. He believed that billions of lives depend upon our leadership and our ideals, and in turn that our own security and prosperity are tied to reaching out to the rest of the world. That is why his picture still

hangs today in homes not only in the Irish wards of Boston and Chicago but also in villages and towns from Africa to Latin America.

John Kennedy's early years were a time when most Americans did not believe we should be much engaged in the world. America turned inward after World War I, unwilling to assume the new burdens of the peace. "A return to normalcy," it was called, but in truth it was a retreat from the hard-won fields of victory. No fireman in Boston would dare turn off the hose prematurely and leave a smoldering house. But that is exactly what America did in the 1920's and the 1930's. And we paid the price in a Draconian peace and restricted trade and higher tariffs and a Great Depression and lost jobs, ruined lives, the rise of fascism abroad, and a terrible Second World War that took the lives of more American young people than any war except for our own Civil War.

Jack Kennedy came home from that Second World War with a lifelong lesson: America could not withdraw from the world. Unless we work to shape events, we will be shaped by them, often in ways that put us at great risk.

A new generation of Americans after the Second World War learned that lesson with him. Together they rebuilt Japan and Europe and contained Soviet expansionism. They founded the institutions of post-war security and prosperity. And by choosing to reach out rather than turn inward, they brought the American people a period of economic growth and security unparalleled in our history. The great middle class was built, and the American dream was born in the lives of Americans, not merely in the eyes of their parents.

Today, we stand at a similar moment of high decision. The end of the cold war has left a world of change in its wake. The Soviet empire and the Soviet Union itself are no more. Russia, once our nuclear adversary, is now our partner in reducing the nuclear threat and in expanding democracy. Ancient animosities in the Middle East are yielding to the promise of peace, a transformation made tangible to billions of people last month in a simple stunning handshake. After decades of apartheid, the Nobel Prize for Peace has gone to two leaders of different colors working for one nonracial democracy in South Africa.

These shifts have been accompanied, and in many cases pushed, by other great changes in the world, those brought about by the commu-

nications revolution and the new global marketplace, entrepreneurial in spirit, intensely competitive and as fast moving as light itself. We see the consequences all around us here in America, in our workplaces, our families, our cities and towns. Some of those consequences are not at all promising. The promise of peace, freedom, and democracy is still thwarted in many places in the world. The promise of prosperity is an illusion to millions of people, not only in poor countries but increasingly in wealthy countries.

Here at home as in all other rich countries, we have had our difficulties in creating jobs and raising incomes. Technology in the moment is not leading to growth and prosperity for millions of our people. We see that in rising sets of insecurities all across America, people more insecure about their jobs, their health care, their communities, their children's education, and their very safety.

The new global economy is dominated by democracy but marred by wars and oppressions. It is expanded by new technologies and vast new horizons but limited by slow growth and stagnant jobs and incomes. Nonetheless, this new global economy is our new frontier.

Our generation must now decide, just as John Kennedy and his generation had to decide at the end of World War II, whether we will harness the galloping changes of our time in the best tradition of John Kennedy and the post-war generation, to the well-being of the American people, or withdraw from the world and recoil from our own problems as we did after World War I. Will we be the Americans of the 1920's, or will we be the Americans of the late forties and early fifties? Will we be the Americans who lifted John Kennedy to the Presidency or the Americans who turned away from the world and paid the price?

President Kennedy understood these challenges of change. He believed in opening the world's trading system. But he also believed we needed to help America's workers who did not win from the expansion of trade to adjust to the rigors of that trade and international competition.

In 1962, to help workers adjust when they lost their jobs because of trade so that they could then get jobs that would be created by an expanded global economy, John Kennedy proposed and the Congress created the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program. And he said—

listen to this—in 1962, “Economic isolation and political leadership are wholly incompatible. The United States has encouraged sweeping changes in free world economic patterns in order to strengthen the forces of freedom. But we cannot ourselves stand still. We must adapt our own economy to the imperatives of a changing world and once more assert our leadership.”

Once again, we must make clear to the American people that our success at home relies on our engagement abroad, that we must face our problems at home and reach out to the world at the same time. Even more than in President Kennedy’s day, the line between foreign and domestic interests is rapidly disappearing. Millions of our best jobs are tied to our ability to trade and sell our products around the world. And our ability to create millions more depends clearly on our ability to work with our friends and neighbors and partners to expand global economic opportunities. That is why we must compete and not retreat, why more than ever before a concern for what happens within our borders, down to the smallest rural town or the most thriving neighborhood in any city, depends upon a concern for what we do beyond our borders.

Over recent months, that imperative has been at the core of this administration’s agenda. We’ve worked to support reform in Russia and the other states of the former Soviet Union. We’ve put our relations with Japan on a new foundation that pays more attention to the economic dynamics of the relationship between our two nations. We’ve pushed for a new worldwide trade accord through the GATT talks. But there is no better example of what we have tried to do to reach out to the world than our attempt to secure an agreement for a North American free trade zone with Canada and Mexico, one that can create 200,000 new jobs for this country by 1995, open a vast new market, make 90 million friends, and set a stage for moving to embrace all of Latin America, 700 million people strong, in a trading unit that will bring prosperity to them and to us.

Last night in New York I told an audience of corporate executives that if they want Americans to support free trade instead of oppose it at a time of great insecurity, they should support the Americans who will not only win but who will be temporarily dislocated; that they should support a new, more modern version of trade adjustment assistance that will work for

this time; that they had no right to ask the American people, any of them, even one of them, to sacrifice unless we were going to make a common investment so that we could grow in the spirit of common community interest in this country and with Latin America.

But today I say to you that our choice is about even more than dollars; that just as business people must take care of workers and invest in their future, Americans as a whole, without regard to their economic standing, must understand that our national destiny depends upon our continuing to reach out. That’s why here in Boston, Congressman Kennedy, his predecessor Speaker O’Neill, from the congressional seat that John Kennedy once occupied, have endorsed this new expansion of America’s interest. And I believe if President Kennedy were still representing that seat in Congress, he would endorse it as well.

If you remember when President Kennedy endorsed the Alliance for Progress, the Latin American countries were moving toward more accountable government and more open economies. And then a lot of reversals took place and Latin America went into a period of real upheaval, political oppression, economic devastation. It is all changing again now. Their efforts are being rewarded: more and more democracies, the second fastest growing region of the world, and a real desire to be our close friends.

President Roosevelt advocated a good neighbor policy toward Latin America. President Kennedy called it the Alliance for Progress. We know that we cannot have a bad neighbor policy. We know that we cannot have an alliance to protect ourselves at their expense. We know that the people who want to buy our products and share our future ought to have a chance to help us to solve our problems at home, even as we help them to pursue their own destiny.

Let us not send a signal by defeating this agreement that we are turning our backs on our neighbors and the rest of the world. Let us reach out to the people here in our home, throughout America, who do not support these endeavors because they have been ravaged by the economic changes of the last 15 years and they have not had their cries, their pains, their frustrations heeded by their National Government. Let us heed them. But let us not adopt a remedy for their just complaints that makes their problems worse. Let us extend ourselves in the world and invest in their future here

at home. We can do that. That is the right answer.

Mr. Justice Holmes was quoted by Senator Kennedy. He once said that we must all be involved in the action and passion of our time for fear of being judged not to have lived. No one would ever level that indictment against John Kennedy.

This is our decisive moment. This is the end of the cold war. This is the dawn of the 21st century. There are many complex, frustrating problems which have very simple and profound and often painful impacts in the lives of the people that we have all struggled to serve. But in these moments, we have to reach deep into ourselves, to our deepest values, to our strongest spirit, and reach out, not shrink back. In these moments our character is tested as individuals and as a nation. The problems we share today are widely shared by other advanced nations. No one has all the answers, but we do know one thing: We will never find the answer if we don't continue on the journey. If we turn back to a proven path of failure, we will never know what we might have become in a new and different age where thankfully, hopefully, my daughter, our children, and our grandchildren will at least be free of the fear of nuclear destruction and where at least most of the competition we face will be based on what

is in our minds, not what is in our hands in the forms of weapons.

I tell you, my fellow Americans, for all the difficulties at this age, this is an age many generations of our predecessors would have prayed to live in. These are the challenges so many of our predecessors would have longed to embrace. How can we turn away from them?

What we owe John Kennedy today at this museum is to make the museum come alive not only in our memories but in our actions. Let us embrace the future with vigor. Let us say we can never expect too little of ourselves. Let us never demand too little of each other. Let us never walk away from the legacy of generations of Americans who themselves have paved the way. Let us be more like those Americans who came home after the Second World War and less like those who withdrew after the First World War.

The 21st century can be our century if we approach it with the vigor, the determination, the wisdom, and the sheer confidence and joy of life that John Kennedy brought to America in 1960.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. at the Steven E. Smith Center.

Remarks on NAFTA to Gillette Employees in Boston, Massachusetts October 29, 1993

Thank you very much. I've had a good time here today. I'm a satisfied customer, that's true. And I rarely cut myself, and when I do, it's my fault, not yours. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Zeien and Governor Weld, Senator Kennedy, Senator Kerry, Congressman Moakley, Congressman Kennedy, and my other friends here today. This was a good experience for me for a lot of reasons. I've had a wonderful day today. We dedicated the Kennedy Museum over at the Kennedy Library. I urge you all to go and see it. It's wonderful, improved, accessible. It's terrific. And they even put a little clip of me in there talking, so I like it better. [*Laughter*]

And I spoke at the Kennedy Library about the challenges that President Kennedy faced

over 30 years ago: trying to get America to solve its problems here at home, which at that time were largely the problems of civil rights, and still to be adventuresome when looking toward the future; when he launched the space program, which we're trying to keep alive and keep going today; when he agreed to establish and push for the establishment of the Peace Corps and the Alliance for Progress in Latin America; and when he started a trade adjustment program for people who lost their jobs in trade because he knew that if we did it right, we'd always have more winners than losers, but people who lost their jobs should be retrained so they could get new and different jobs. And this is the kind